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DOCTOR STRANGE

MARVEL

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STEPHEN STRANGE was a pre-eminent surgeon until a car accident damaged the nerves in his hands. His ego drove him to scour the globe for a magical cure. Instead, he found a mysterious wizard called the Ancient One, who taught him the mystic arts and opened his eyes to the magic behind reality. These lessons enabled Stephen to become the SORCERER SUPREME, Earth's first defense against all manner of magical threats. His patients call him...

DOCTOR STRANGE

After being usurped as Sorcerer Supreme of Earth, Doctor Strange became SORCERER SUPREME OF ASGARD--only to find himself trapped there when Thor's death separated Earth from the other Nine Realms. With no way home and few allies remaining in Asgard, Strange will have to learn on the job...

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UNDER THE GAZE OF *HAKKOR*, BY THE WORD OF THE *LORDS OF ETERNAL UNREST* AND THE CRIES OF THE *LADY OF DEAD HEARTS*--

--I COMMAND THEE...*OPEN!*

I COMMAND THEE...

...OPEN!

OH DEAR.

ASGARD.

NOT EVEN THE *STAFF OF YGGDRASIL* CAN OPEN A PORTAL BACK TO PRECIOUS, PRECIOUS MIDGARD.

NOT EVEN A SPLINTER FROM THE WORLD TREE, RENT BY THE GOOD DOCTOR HIMSELF.

WHAT IS A *SORCERER SUPREME* TO DO?

CURSE, PERHAPS? RAGE AGAINST THE FATES FOR DENYING HIM HIS VENGEANCE?

NAY, NAY-- FOR HE HAS ALREADY DONE THAT, *HUGINN.*

PERHAPS THEN, *MUNINN,* HE WILL SULK AND BROOD AND GLOWER?

OH, BUT SURELY, HE HAS HAD HIS FILL OF SUCH DARK MOODS?

TRULY, THE UNIVERSE IS A PLACE OF UNENDING CRUELTY TO ONE SUCH AS THE NOBLE *DOCTOR--*

CAN I HELP YOU?

US? HELP *US?* WE ARE BUT *RAVENS!* WHAT HELP COULD *WE* NEED FROM *YOU?*

BUT *LADY SIF* WOULD LIKE A WORD.

LADY SIF, WHATEVER YOU NEED OF ME, WHATEVER *ASGARD* NEEDS OF ME, I STAND READY.

"WHATEVER ASGARD NEEDS" OF YOU. I SEE.

DOCTOR STRANGE, YOU CAME HERE SEEKING POWER BECAUSE YOU'D BEEN SWINDLED OUT OF YOUR STATION ON MIDGARD.

THOR GRANTED YOU AN OPPORTUNITY, ESTABLISHING THE TITLE OF *SORCERER SUPREME OF ASGARD* JUST FOR YOU...

...AND YOU CONSPIRED WITH LOKI TO *SEIZE* THAT POWER.

NOW THOR IS DEAD, BY LOKI'S HAND, AND MIDGARD HAS BEEN CUT OFF FROM THE TEN--NOW THE *NINE*-- REALMS.

I DID NOT KNOW WHERE LOKI'S SCHEMES WERE LEADING. IF I HAD, I WOULD NEVER HAVE--

DOCTOR, MY HOME IS CLOSE TO CHAOS. I DO NOT NEED *EXCUSES*, AND I DO NOT NEED ONE OF LOKI'S *FRIENDS* GETTING *UNDERFOOT.*

THEN USE ME.

IF YOU DO NOT TRUST ME, IF YOU DO NOT BELIEVE ME, THEN USE ME TO START *SOLVING PROBLEMS.* I CAN AT LEAST DO *THAT.*

OH, BUT THAT IS WHY I CALLED FOR YOU, SORCERER--TO TELL YOU THAT YOU *CAN* BE OF USE.

TELL ME--

"--HAVE YOU EVER BEEN TO *ALFHEIM*?"

SIF WANTS ME OUT OF ASGARD, AND WHO CAN BLAME HER?

LOKI BEGGED ME NOT TO TELL THOR THAT THEY'D BROKEN THEIR EXILE, AND I AGREED TO IT.*

IT HAD SEEMED LIKE A WISE MOVE AT THE TIME TO PREVENT AN EVEN GREATER RIFT DEVELOPING BETWEEN THE TWO.

*IN DOCTOR STRANGE OF ASGARD!

BUT DID I AGREE IN ORDER TO HASTEN MY JOURNEY TOWARD BECOMING SORCERER SUPREME?

I NEEDED THE POWER TO RETURN TO EARTH, TO BATTLE DOOM...BUT IF I *HAD* TOLD THOR, HIS MURDER MIGHT HAVE BEEN AVERTED.

ALL MY PLANS, BOTH PETTY AND GRAND, HAVE COME CRASHING DOWN...

...WHILE MY NEED TO RETURN TO MY LOVED ONES HAS NEVER BEEN MORE URGENT.

I NEED TO RESOLVE THIS BUSINESS IN ALFHEIM AND DO IT *QUICKLY.*

TO THIS END, I HAVE ARRANGED FOR ASSISTANCE IN MY DEALINGS WITH THE FACTIONS AT PLAY.

FOR IT IS NOT ONLY THE *LIGHT ELVES OF ALFHEIM* I'LL BE DEALING WITH, BUT ALSO THE *ANGELS OF HEVEN.*

AND IF YOU'RE *TRUCKING* WITH ANGELS...

...YOU TRUCK WITH *ANGELA.*

LJOSALFGARD, ALFHEIM.

DOCTOR STRANGE, I PRESUME?

ANGELA. YOU ARE--

IMPOSING. I AM AWARE.

...

I WAS GOING TO SAY--YOU ARE *VERY GOOD* TO MEET ME HERE.

YOU HIRED ME. WE HAVE A BARGAIN. OF *COURSE* I WOULD MEET YOU HERE.

SHALL WE DEPART?

BEFORE WE DO...

MY DEEPEST, *DEEPEST* CONDOLENCES ON THE LOSS OF YOUR *BROTHER.*

THOR MAY HAVE BEEN A GOD, BUT HE WAS ALSO A GOOD, KIND AND *DECENT* MAN.

NOW SHALL WE--?

YES, NOW WE CAN GO.

HAVE YOU EVER BEEN TO ALFHEIM BEFORE?

I HAVE NOT.

IT IS AN ANNOYING PLACE, FULL OF HAPPINESS AND PEACE.

DURING THE ***WAR OF THE REALMS,*** ALFHEIM FELL TO ***MALEKITH*** AND THE ***DARK ELVES.*** IT WAS WOUNDED BUT HAS SINCE HEALED.

ONE OF THOSE WOUNDS OPENED UP A FORGOTTEN CAVE SYSTEM. THEY AWAIT YOU THERE.

I KNOW OF ***AELSA,*** THE LIGHT ELF QUEEN, BUT I KNOW PRECIOUS LITTLE ABOUT THE QUEEN OF HEVEN.

IDYL REFUSES THAT TITLE. SHE IS MERELY THE ***REGENT,*** SHE SAYS, HOLDING THE THRONE FOR THE ***RIGHTFUL*** QUEEN.

AND DO WE KNOW WHO THIS RIGHTFUL QUEEN *IS?*

SOMEONE WHO DOES NOT WANT THE JOB.

STAND STRAIGHT, YOU FOOLS.

RHIALLA.

ANGELA.

THIS IS THE SORCERER SUPREME OF ASGARD.

SORCERER, THERE IS A DEAD ELF IN A COFFIN THAT WE WANT TO DECAPITATE.

WE REQUIRE YOU TO BEND THE LIGHT ELVES TO OUR NEEDS BEFORE OUR IRRITATION LEADS TO VIOLENCE.

...*RHIALLA*, IS IT? HOW LONG HAS THE COFFIN BEEN DOWN HERE?

SINCE BEFORE THE EXILE OF HEVEN.

BUT THAT... THAT WAS *EONS* AGO.

ABSOLUTELY. BUT WE STILL WANT TO *CUT OFF HIS HEAD.*

THE DEAD ELF IS, APPARENTLY, *ROYALTY*, AND ALFHEIM'S CUSTOMS DO NOT ALLOW SUCH A...*UGH.*

ARE YOU OKAY?

I DO NOT CARE ABOUT ANY OF THIS.

COME--MY MOTHER AND QUEEN AELSA AWAIT. I MUST WARN YOU, HOWEVER-- THE REGENT IS QUITE... *AGITATED.*

AND I WILL CUT THE EARS OFF THE FIRST #%@#%& ELF WHO TRIES TO STOP ME!

MOTHER!

AH, ASGARD'S WIZARD. PERHAPS YOU ARE THE CALMING VOICE WE NEED.

YOUR MAJESTY, THE *LADY SIF* SENDS HER REGARDS.

REGENT IDYL, PERHAPS YOU COULD TELL ME ABOUT THE ELF IN THIS COFFIN? FOR A START, WHO PUT HIM THERE?

OH, *I* DID.

HERE LIES THE WIZARD ***VYRBODIN,*** WHOSE EVIL THREATENED ***ALL*** OF THE TEN REALMS.

SUCH WAS THE DANGER HE POSED, ODIN TASKED ***TWO WHOLE*** CHOIRS OF ANGELS TO TRACK HIM DOWN AND KILL HIM.

"HE WIELDED MAGIC LIKE NOTHING I HAD EVER SEEN, AND HE *SLAUGHTERED* MY SISTERS.

"I WAS THE SOLE SURVIVOR, THOUGH ONLY BECAUSE HE THOUGHT ME TOO *INJURED* TO CONTINUE THE FIGHT.

"I WAITED TILL HIS BACK WAS TURNED AND THEN KILLED HIM.

"AFTER THAT, I BOUND HIM IN THIS IRON COFFIN AND BURIED HIM."

ONE OF VYRBODIN'S TRICKS WAS TO *STEAL MEMORIES*, SO I COULD NOT REMEMBER WHERE HIS COFFIN LAY... UNTIL NOW.

BECAUSE MY MOTHER WAS UNABLE TO OFFER HIS BODY AS PROOF, THE CONTRACT WITH ODIN WAS NEVER FULFILLED. IT HAS... ***STAINED*** OUR HISTORY.

BUT NOW WE CAN LAY THAT TO REST! ALL WE NEED DO IS ***OPEN*** THE COFFIN AND CUT OFF HIS ***HEAD!***

AS MURDEROUS AND AS EVIL AS HE ***UNDOUBTEDLY*** WAS, VYRBODIN IS STILL OF ROYAL LINEAGE, AND WE WILL NOT ALLOW SUCH DESECRATION. IT IS...UNSEEMLY.

UNSEEMLY?!

REGENT IDYL, ***PLEASE.***

QUEEN AELSA, WHO WAS HE? A DUKE? AN EARL?

HE WAS A PRINCE. HE WAS MY ***GRANDSON.***

AH. THE LOSS OF--

YOUR WORDS OF CONDOLENCE ARE HARDLY NECESSARY, WIZARD. I DESPISED HIM ***THEN.*** I DESPISE HIM ***NOW.***

ODIN IS DEAD. EVEN ***THOR*** IS DEAD. THE CONTRACT, SURELY, HAS LAPSED.

CONTRACTS DO NOT LAPSE.

THEY ARE FULFILLED, OR THEY ARE CANCELED. NOTHING IS FOR NOTHING.

THEN A *COMPROMISE.*

QUEEN AELSA, AS SORCERER SUPREME ***AND*** A MEDICAL DOCTOR, WOULD YOU PERMIT ***ME*** TO EXAMINE YOUR GRANDSON'S REMAINS IN PRIVATE?

IF I CAN CONFIRM THAT THIS IS INDEED VYRBODIN, WOULD THAT SETTLE THE DEBT TO EVERYONE'S SATISFACTION?

IF YOU GIVE YOUR WORD THAT YOU WILL BE RESPECTFUL, AND AFTERWARD, HIS REMAINS WILL BE BURIED AGAIN IN ACCORDANCE WITH LIGHT ELF TRADITION--

--THAT WOULD BE... ACCEPTABLE.

I WOULD NEED CERTAIN...

...ASSURANCES.

BUT, YES. WE WOULD BE PREPARED TO ACCEPT THAT.

THANK YOU.

WITH ALL THE RECENT UPHEAVALS AND A GROWING WAVE OF UNEASE THAT IS SPREADING THROUGHOUT THE REALMS--

--IT IS GRATIFYING TO NOTE THAT *COMPROMISE* AND *LOGIC* CAN STILL WIN OUT AGAINST *FEAR* AND *UNREASONABLE DEMANDS.*

I WILL STILL NEED YOU TO CUT OFF HIS HEAD.

I'M SORRY, *WHAT?*

VYRBODIN IS NOT *DEAD,* DOCTOR.

BUT...BUT YOU *KILLED HIM.*

I KILLED HIM AS BEST *AS I WAS ABLE,* BUT WHEN YOU OPEN THAT COFFIN, HE WILL WAKE, I HAVE NO DOUBT.

YOU MUST TAKE HIS HEAD *IMMEDIATELY* AND THEN SEAL THE COFFIN ONCE MORE.

I DOUBT QUEEN AELSA WOULD LOOK TOO KINDLY UPON THAT.

QUEEN AELSA CANNOT KNOW ABOUT IT. NOBODY CAN.

FOR THE GOOD OF THE REALMS?

THE LAST TIME SOMEONE ASKED ME TO TRUST THEM--

NOT FOR THE REALMS, DOCTOR. FOR ME. FOR MY *DAUGHTER.* I BESEECH YOU. I *BEG* YOU.

DAMMIT.

I WILL NOT BREAK MY WORD TO THE QUEEN...

...BUT I *CAN* PROMISE THAT I WILL SURROUND THE COFFIN WITH A *SPELL* TO KEEP THE BODY IN ITS CURRENT STATE--

--AND I WILL ENSURE THAT IT *REMAINS THAT WAY* UNTIL THEY RETURN IT TO THE GROUND.

THANK YOU.

RHIALLA AND I ARE NEEDED IN HEVEN, BUT I WILL LEAVE MY ANGELS HERE. AND MARK MY WORDS WELL, SORCERER...

"...BE CAREFUL."

THE HIGH ELVES TRANSPORT THE COFFIN TO THE ***ROYAL HOSPITAL*** AND I TELL EVERYONE IT WILL TAKE HOURS TO CONSTRUCT THE SHIELD.

I ***LIE***, BASICALLY.

ONE OF THE STRONGEST SHIELDS KNOWN TO MAGIC CAN BE CONSTRUCTED IN MOMENTS—

--BUT I NEED TO TAKE MY TIME WITH THE ***STASIS SPELL*** THAT COMES ***NEXT.***

THE MAGIC OF ASGARD AND THE NINE REALMS IS A BEAST WITH MANY FACES, AND I DON'T HAVE THE VISHANTI TO KEEP EVERYTHING IN LINE.

BUT IF WHAT IDYL SAYS IS TRUE, THEN THE VERY DISCOVERY OF THE ***CAVES*** MAY HAVE BEEN ENOUGH TO WAKE VYRBODIN...

...AND I DON'T WANT TO TAKE ANY UNNECESSARY--

WAIT.

I KNOW NOT WHAT ***YEAR*** IT IS, WIZARD...

OH NO.

NO NO NO

BUT WHAT A TIME TO BE ALIVE!

#@$%.

OH MY...

OH, TO THINK! TO MOVE! TO BREATHE!

HOW I HAVE MISSED LIVING!

STRANGE!

AND WHAT IS THIS? OH! A SHIELD! BUT HOW SMALL IT IS! HOW CRAMPED!

UNFF!

LET US EXPAND IT, WHAT SAY YOU? IT WILL PROVIDE SOME ROOM TO TALK!

VYRBODIN. I'VE HEARD A LOT ABOUT YOU.

A *MORTAL!* HOW WONDERFUL!

I HAD NEVER MET ONE UNTIL THIS MOMENT! IN TRUTH, I BELIEVED YOU TO BE NOTHING BUT A *CHILDREN'S STORY.*

YET HERE YOU ARE! WITH A *MUSTACHE!*

YOU SEEM TO HAVE WEATHERED YOUR EONS WELL, CONSIDERING.

IS *THAT* HOW LONG IT'S BEEN? IN DEATH, TIME PASSES QUICKLY. A MOMENT IN THE BLINK--

AN *ATTACK,* MORTAL? BEFORE I GET MY BEARINGS?

HOW *RUTHLESS* OF YOU!

KSSSSHH

I LIKE IT!

WHAT... WHAT WAS *THAT?*

THAT? THAT WAS *MAGIC*, MAGICIAN.

DO NOT FEEL BAD--THAT TECHNIQUE WAS NICHE WHEN I WAS YOUNG TOO.

YOU ARE USED TO THE MAGICS OF WATOOMB AND AGAMOTTO, YES? I KNOW OF THEIR KIND.

SUCH MAGIC IS GENERATED FROM THE DAILY CHURN OF EXISTENCE--

--AN ENERGY THAT FLOWS FROM THE MOMENT-BY-MOMENT MACHINERY OF THE UNIVERSE, SO THAT THE WELL NEVER RUNS DRY.

BUT LIKE EVERYTHING-- *ALMOST* EVERYTHING-- THERE IS AN ALTERNATIVE, AND SO THERE IS A GAP BETWEEN WHAT *IS* AND WHAT *COULD HAVE BEEN.*

IN THAT GAP, THERE IS *ANOTHER* ENERGY GENERATED FROM THE *POTENTIAL* OF A THING, FROM THE *MISSED OPPORTUNITY* OF A MOMENT.

THERE IS A MAGIC THAT COMES FROM THE EVENTS THAT DO *NOT* HAPPEN, JUST AS THERE IS A MAGIC THAT COMES FROM THE EVENTS THAT *DO.*

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THOSE MOMENTS ARE SAID TO BE FINER THAN THE BLADE OF THE KEENEST SCYTHE.

SCYTHE MAGIC IS HARD TO DETECT, HARDER TO WRANGLE, HARDER STILL TO UTILIZE...

BUT I WAS ***BORN*** WHEN I SHOULD NOT HAVE BEEN BORN, I ***LEARNED*** WHAT I SHOULD NOT HAVE LEARNED--

--AND I HAVE ***DONE*** WHAT I SHOULD NOT HAVE DONE.

I AM NOTHING IF NOT RESOURCEFUL, AND I HAVE ***UTILIZED*** THIS MAGIC.

AND TODAY, I WILL ***KILL YOU WITH IT.***

STRANGE, REMOVE THIS ***SHIELD*** AND WE WILL REMOVE HIS ***HEAD.***

IT'S COMING DOW--

UGH!

SUCH IS THE TROUBLE WITH ANGELS. THEY'VE NEVER HAD ANY ***PATIENCE.***

I WILL *SHOW* YOU PATIENCE WHEN I AM PUNCTURING YOUR LUNGS *ONE AT A TIME* INSTEAD OF *BOTH* AT--

RHIALLA? WHAT ARE YOU--? WHERE ARE YOUR *WINGS?*

THAT IS NOT RHIALLA.

SISTERS!

GUHH!

CLANG

CLANG

BY THE GODDESS, YOU ARE *QUICK.*

PARAKKION'S WAR MACE!

UGH!

TARAKKION'S BATTLE-AX!

KARAKKION'S BROADSWORD!

HEF!

YOU CALL UPON FEARSOME MAGICS *INDEED*, MORTAL!

BUT I WAS RAISED TO BELIEVE THE UNIVERSE WAS ALWAYS ABOUT TO END!

AT ANY MOMENT, I EXPECTED TO BE TRAMPLED UNDERFOOT BY AN ENTITY FROM BEYOND THE STARS!

I DO NOT *MIND* FEARSOME!

THEN IS A *CONVERSATION* OUT OF THE QUESTION?

TELL ME WHY, VYRBODIN. WHAT IS IT YOU *WANT?*

...

MY NEEDS ARE SIMPLE.

I MERELY WISH TO CONTINUE THE WORK THAT ODIN INTERRUPTED WHEN HE SENT THOSE ANGELS TO KILL ME. *IMPORTANT* WORK! *VITAL* WORK!

TELL ME ABOUT IT. MAYBE I CAN HELP.

MIGHT YOU? *WOULD* YOU? IF THAT IS THE CASE, THEN WE CAN CEASE THIS VIOLENCE BEFORE *MORE* BLOOD IS SPILLED!

TELL ME WHAT YOU WERE WORKING ON AND WE'LL DISCUSS IT.

YES. YES, PERHAPS...

SOMETIMES, THE FATE OF THE UNIVERSE *DIVERTS* FROM ITS ORIGINAL COURSE.

IT HAPPENED IN MY YOUTH AND I CAN FEEL THAT IT HAS HAPPENED *MULTIPLE TIMES* IN THIS AGE, AND *RECENTLY.*

I PLAN TO COLLECT THE ENERGIES OF EVERY PERSON WHOSE LIFE HAS BEEN ALTERED BY WORLD-CHANGING EVENTS--

--AND THEN *USE* THAT ENERGY TO SEEK OUT AND KILL *ALL LIVING CHILDREN* THROUGHOUT THE REALMS.

TELL ME, MORTAL, COULD YOU FIND IT IN YOUR HEART TO *HELP ME* ACHIEVE MY DREAM?

I DID NOT THINK SO.

UGH!

STAY BEHIND ME, STRANGE. I HAVE HER *MEASURE* NOW.

MAYBE *YOU* SHOULD STAY BEHIND *ME*, ANGELA.

AND WHY IS THAT?

TRUST ME.

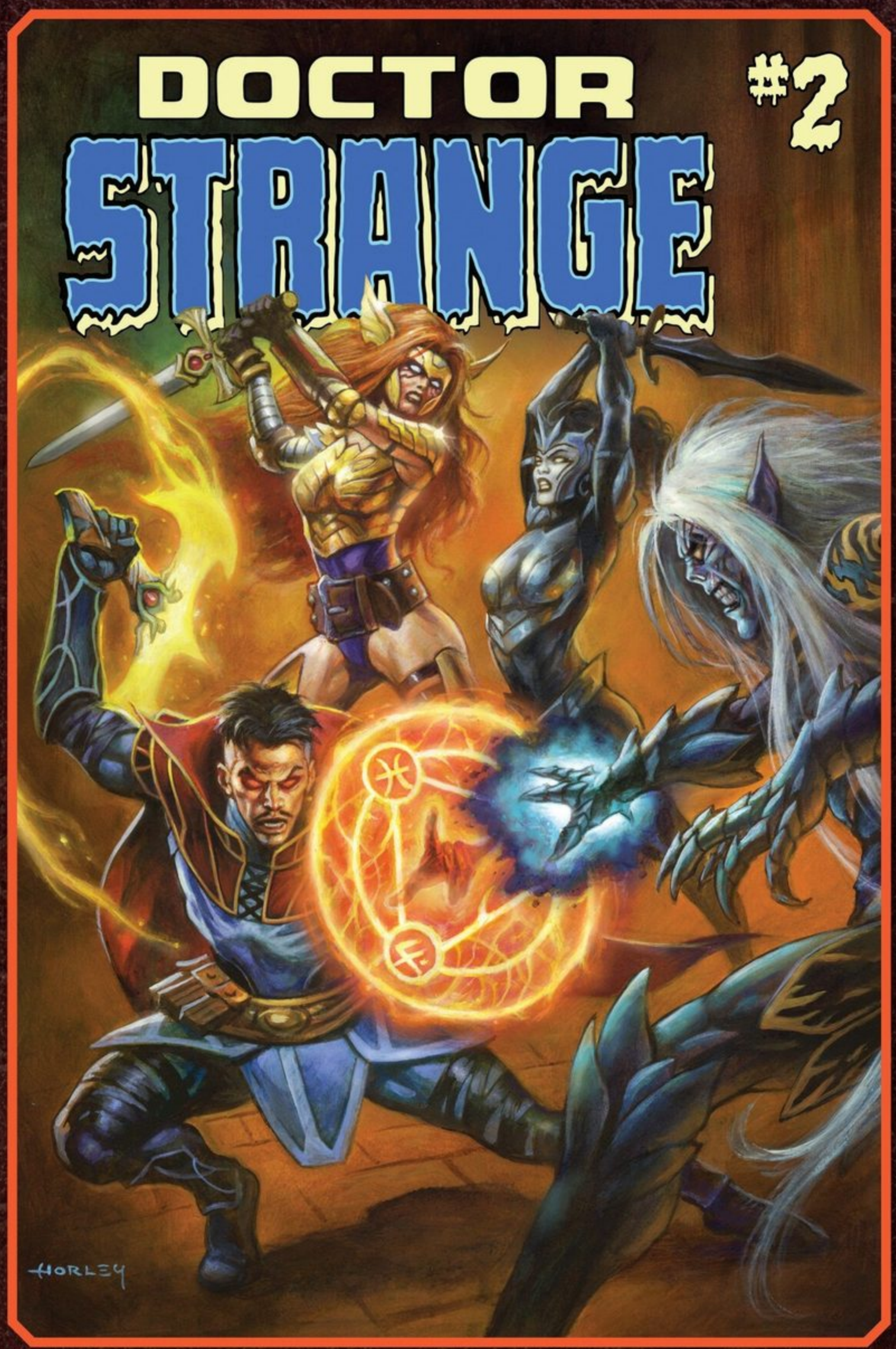
THIS NEXT BIT IS NOT GOING TO BE FUN.

NOT FUN AT ALL!

TO BE CONTINUED...

NEXT

After opening the mysterious coffin plaguing Alfheim, Strange and Angela come face-to-face with the dark wizard VYRBODIN and his right hand SCYTHE-RHIALLA-- a twisted replica of the Regent's daughter. As Vyrbodin targets the children of Alfheim to harvest his Scythe magic, Strange must move Heven and Earth to stop him before his power grows...



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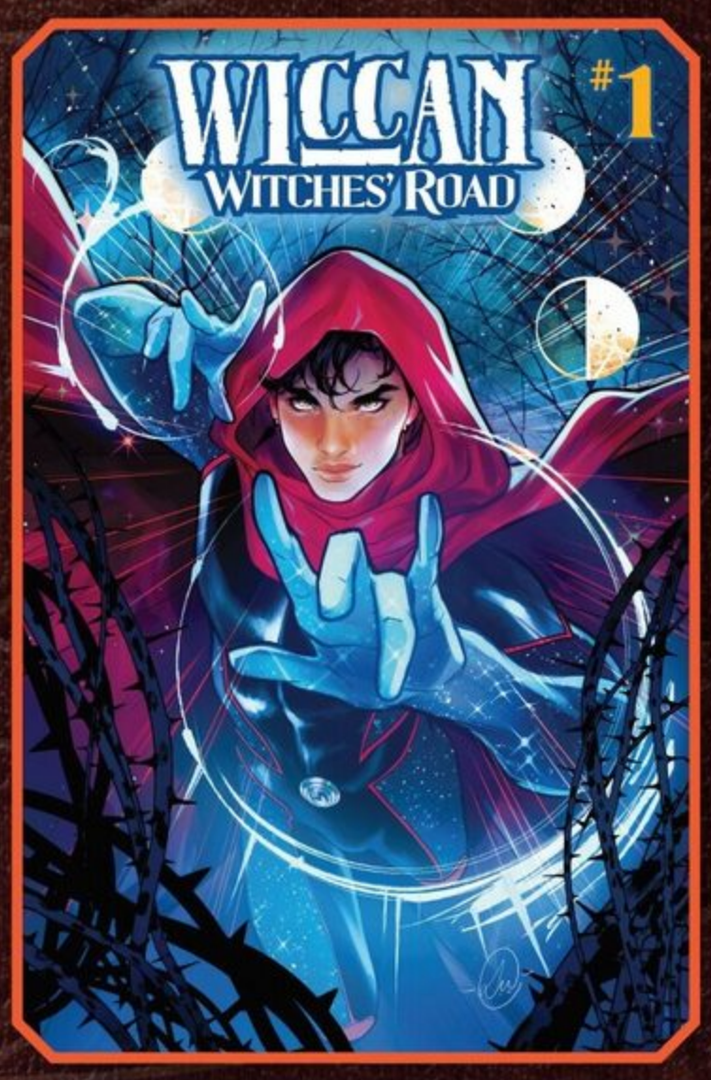

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